

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FAHAD PLACES PRIORITY ON MILITARY - REQUESTS F 15

SUMMARY: MININTERIOR PRINCE FAHAD IN DISCUSSIONS WITH UNDER-
SECRETARY ROBINSON PLACED GREAT EMPHASIS ON STRENGTHENING THE
MILITARY POTENTIAL OF SAUDI ARABIA TO MAKE HER A KEY ELEMENT
IN STABILIZING THE ENTIRE GULF AND PENINSULA. HE ALSO
ARGUED THAT SUCH MILITARY STRENGTHENING WAS NECESSARY IF
SAUDI ARABIA WERE TO PLAY A FULL ROLE IN LEADING THE OIL
STATES AWAY FROM RADICAL POLICIES. ONLY IF SUCH COUNTRIES
AS KUWAIT AND NORTH YEMEN SAUDI ARABIA WAS CAPABLE OF PROTECTING
THEM FROM SUCH RADICAL POWERS AS IRAQ AND SOUTH YEMEN COULD
SHE PLAY THIS ROLE WHICH WOULD PROMOTE U.S. INTERESTS THROUGH-
OUT THE AREA. HE SPECIFICALLY ASKED FOR U.S. EVALUATION
OF THE PURCHASE OF F-15 FIGHTERS AS ONE IMPORTANT STEP
AND SAID THAT THE SAUDI MILITARY WERE DISSATISFIED WITH THE
AMOUNT OF MATERIAL AND THE SPEED WITH WHICH THEY WERE
RECEIVING U.S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT, DRAWING COMPARISONS
WITH THE SOVIET SUPPLY OF SYRIA. THE PRINCE SAID THAT
THERE WAS A GROUP WITHIN THE SAG WHO WERE SEEKING TO HAVE
THE KINGDOM TURN TO RELIANCE ON EUROPE FOR A MAJOR SHARE IN
DEVELOPING THE COUNTRY BOTH MILITARILY AND ON THE CIVILIAN
SIDE. PRINCE FAHAD SAID THAT HE WANTED TO MAINTAIN THE
U.S. CONNECTION BUT NEEDED HELP TO DO SO. HE PAINTED A PIC-
TURE OF EVEN LARGER INVOLVEMENT BY THE USG AND PRIVATE
AMERICAN COMPANIES IN DEVELOPING THE AGRICULTURE AND INDUS-
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TRY OF THE KINGDOM PROVIDED THE U.S. ORIENTED GROUP WITHIN
THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO BE SUCCESSFUL. THE UNDERSEC-
RETARY NOTED OUR INTENTION TO SEND A HIGH-RANKING U.S.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL TO SAUDI ARABIA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ALONG THE LINES DISCUSSED WITH THE SECRETARY THE PREVIOUS DAY AND SUGGESTED THAT SAUDI ARABIA MEANWHILE COULD ASSIST THE U.S. BY REASSURING SYRIA ON THE INTENTIONS OF THE SECRETARY IN SEEKING TO REALLY RESOLVE THE PROBLEM OF THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE U.S. ALSO HAS A NEW AND BROADER PLAN FOR DEVELOPING AGRICULTURE IN THE KINGDOM AND IN DEVELOPING THE FERTILIZER INDUSTRY. THE PRINCE SAID THAT HE WAS SEEING THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER LATER THAT DAY AND WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SUPPORT THE INITIATIVES OF THE SECRETARY. END SUMMARY.

1. PRINCE FAHAD, MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND EFFECTIVE OPERATING HEAD OF THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT, IN A FEBRUARY 10 MEETING, ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR 45 MINUTES BUT WHICH LASTED OVER TWO HOURS, WITH UNDERSECRETARY ROBINSON DWELT AT LENGTH ON HIS LONG HISTORY OF SUPPORTING THE AMERICAN CONNECTION AMONG SAUDI POLICY MAKERS. HE CONCENTRATED ON NECESSITY FOR DEVELOPING A MORE CREDIBLE SAUDI MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT ARGUING THAT ONLY IF THIS HAPPENED AND QUICKLY WOULD SAUDI ARABIA BE ABLE TO PLAY ITS FULL ROLE BOTH IN THE GULF AND IN THE PENINSULA AS A WHOLE. THIS WOULD BE VERY MUCH IN THE U.S. INTEREST BECAUSE SAUDI ARABIA AS A MATTER OF POLICY STILL SOUGHT A REDUCTION IN THE PRICE OF PETROLEUM AND WANTED TO CONTINUE PROCESS OF WEANING SMALLER STATES FROM FEAR OF AND DEPENDENCE ON THE RADICAL ARAB STATES IN AREA, NAMELY IRAQ AND SOUTH YEMEN.

2. THE PRINCE EMPHASIZED THAT THE SITUATION HAD CHANGED WITH REGARD TO RELATIONS WITH THE GULF STATES SINCE HIS EFFORTS TO SETTLE BORDER DISPUTE WITH ABUL DHABI. THESE STATES WERE NO LONGER FEARFUL OF SAUDI ARABIA AND INDEED SAUDI ARABIA, HE SAID SEVERAL TIMES, DID NOT HAVE ANY AGGRESSIVE INTENTIONS WHATSOEVER. IT WAS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO ARM SAUDI ARABIA WITH MODERN WEAPONS THAT WOULD BE BELIEVABLE. HE KNEW THERE WERE ELEMENTS IN CONGRESS AND IN DOD WHO SOUGHT TO PORTRAY SAUDI INTENTIONS AS WANTING TO USE SUCH ARMS AGAINST HER NEIGHBORS OR EVEN AGAINST ISRAEL. HE WANTED TO GIVE
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ASSURANCES THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD NEVER ATTACK ISRAEL. THE ARMS WERE NEEDED PURELY FOR THEIR OWN PROTECTION AND TO BALANCE THE ARMS BEING SENT TO THE RADICAL STATES IN THE AREA.

3. DEVELOPING THE THEME FURTHER, PRINCE FAHAD SAID THAT SEVERAL OFFICERS, BOTH THOSE STILL IN SYRIA DURING HIS RECENT VISIT THERE AND THOSE IN TABUK AND KHAMIS MUSHAYT HAD OPENLY EXPRESSED TO HIM THEIR SHAME AND CONCERN REGARDING SAUDI WEAKNESS RELATIVE TO THESE RADICAL STATES. HE WANTED AN EVALUATION MADE OF THE F-15 AIRCRAFT

AND ITS AVAILABILITY TO SAUDI ARABIA. THE KINGDOM'S MILITARY WEAKNESS LED TO SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN MAKING SAUDI POLICY LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVE AND BELIEVABLE IN OTHER AREAS SUCH AS ENERGY. SAUDI ARABIA STILL HAD AS ITS POLICY THAT THE PRICE OF PETROLEUM SHOULD COME DOWN. THE ULF STATES WERE FOLLOWING HER LEAD BUT KUWAIT WAS NOT AND THIS WAS MOSTLY BECAUSE OF HER FEAR OF IRAQ. IF KUWAIT FELT THAT SHE COULD RELY ON SAUDI ARABIA HER FEAR OF IRAQ MIGHT LARGELY DISAPPEAR.

4. THERE WAS A GROUP, ANOTHER GROUP INSIDE THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT, WHICH OPPOSED PLACING SUCH RELIANCE ON THE U.S. FOR MILITARY AND CIVILIAN DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM. EVEN NOW THE EUROPEANS WERE OPENING THEIR ARMS TO SAUDI ARABIA AND PROMISING THAT THEY WERE READY TO COOPERATE IN ALL FIELDS. IT WAS BECOMING EMBARRASSING TO THE PRINCE TO HAVE SO LITTLE TO SHOW FOR THE EFFORTS MADE SO FAR WITH THE U.S. IN BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN FIELDS. THE U.S. MUST FIND WAYS TO STRENGTHEN THE SAUDIS MILITARY.

5. TURNING TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM, THE PRINCE SAID THAT THEY WERE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT AGRICULTURE. THE KINGDOM HAD ADEQUATE WATER RESOURCES AND SOIL AND THEY WERE KEEN ON MAKING THE COUNTRY SELF-SUFFICIENT. WE DO NOT CARE ABOUT THE EXPENSE HE SAID SO LONG AS IT IS ECONOMICALLY SOUND IN THE LONG RUN. IN INDUSTRY, THEY WISHED TO DEVELOP SOME LIGHT INDUSTRY TO MEET CONSUMPTION NEEDS WITHIN THE KINGDOM AND PERHAPS EXPORT TO GULF AREA. JOINT VENTURES WITH SAUDI CITIZENS WERE NEEDED AND THE JOINT COMMISSION COULD BE HELPFUL ON THIS.
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6. THE UNDERSECRETARY SAID THAT HE COULD NOT ASSURE THE PRINCE THAT THE F-15'S COULD BE DELIVERED BUT THIS WOULD BE REPORTED TO SECRETARY. PLANS HAD BEEN LAID TO SEND OUT A HIGH RANKING DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICIAL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THERE WAS MUCH APPRECIATION FOR THE EFFORTS OF SAUDI ARABIA AND OF THE PRINCE IN HELPING TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM OF THE RELATIONS OF SYRIA AND THE OTHER STATES WITH ISRAEL, AND FOR ITS HELP IN ESTABLISHING THE CLOSE FRIENDLY RELATIONS THAT NOW EXISTED BETWEEN EGYPT AND THE U.S. HE NOTED WITH APPRECIATION THE EFFORTS OF THE PRINCE ON CONTINUATION OF THE BAHRAIN NAVAL FACILITY FOR THE UNITED STATES. THE SECRETARY HAD PROMISED THAT THERE WOULD SOON BE A VISIT BY A HIGH RANKING DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICIAL TO REVIEW SAUDI MILITARY NEEDS. IN SO FAR AS THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORT, THE SECRETARY HAD MADE HIM RESPONSIBLE FOR FOLLOWING THE WORK OF ALL OF THE COMMISSIONS AND THIS WOULD HAVE THE HIGHEST PRIORITY. THEY HAD PREPARED A NEW AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM WHICH WOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE LATER THE SAME DAY.

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